

## Message Text

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INFO AMEMBASSY LA PAZ

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AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

C O N F I D E N T I A L LIMA 0233

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PFOR, PE, UR

SUBJECT: PERU INDIGNANTLY REJECTS "LE NOUVEAU JOURNAL"

ARTICLE ON A PURPORTED MILITARY TREATY WITH  
THE USSR

SUMMARY: A FRENCH PERIODICAL, "LE NOUVEAU JOURNAL", HAS PRINTED A STORY, PICKED UP BY AFP, THAT THE GOP HAS SIGNED A MILITARY PACT WITH THE USSR. THE CURRENT ISSUE OF "TIME" SPEAKS OF AN ARMS RACE BETWEEN PERU AND CHILE. THE GOP HAS ENERGETICALLY AND INDIGNANTLY REJECTED THESE CHARGES. THE LIMA PRESS OF JANUARY 8 PUBLISHED A FOREIGN MINISTRY COMMUNIQUE DATED THE PREVIOUS DAY, TOGETHER WITH COMMENTS BY FONMIN DE LA PUENTE AND EDITORIAL COMMENTARY, ALL REJECTING THE "LE NOUVEAU JOURNAL" ARTICLE AND QUALIFYING IT AS TOTALLY FALSE, IRRESPONSIBLE AND LACKING IN SERIOUSNESS AND ETHICAL SENSE. END SUMMARY.

1. A FONOFF COMMUNIQUE OF JANUARY 7 REJECTS IN ENERGETIC TERMS A RECENT ARTICLE IN "LE NOUVEAU JOURNAL", AND THE "RASH" SPECULATIONS THEREIN ABOUT A PERU-USSR MILITARY PACT. IN  
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ADDITION TO BRANDING THE ARTICLE TOTALLY FALSE, THE COMMUNIQUE REITERATES THE GOP'S EARLIER DENUNCIATION OF THE "CAMPAIGN BEING ORCHESTRATED BY THOSE SECTORS INTERESTED IN CREATING A CONFLICT ZONE IN THE SOUTHERN PACIFIC". IT REJECTS THE NOTION THAT PERU, IN ITS PROGRAM OF REPLACING OBSOLETE MILITARY EQUIPMENT, FINDS ITSELF IDEOLOGICALLY OR POLITICALLY TIED TO THE COUNTRY WHICH SUPPLIES

NEW EQUIPMENT. FINALLY, THE COMMUNIQUE SUGGESTS THAT THE PARIS NEWSPAPER'S UNUSUAL INTEREST IN LATIN AMERICA IS DUE TO ITS DESIRE TO SERVE THOSE WHO TRAFFIC IN AND ENRICH THEMSELVES FROM CONFRONTATIONS BETWEEN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES.

2. FONMIN DE LA PUENTE MET WITH JOURNALISTS AT THE TIME THE COMMUNIQUE WAS ISSUED. HE DECLARED THAT THE ARTICLE WAS DOUBLY ILL-INTENTIONED, DESIGNED ON THE ONE HAND TO CREATE TENSIONS BETWEEN PERU AND ITS NEIGHBORS, AND ON THE OTHER TO TRY TO MANEUVER THE GOP INTO MAKING PUBLIC DECLARATIONS THAT MIGHT BE INTERPRETED AS A SIGN OF DIS-AGREEMENT OR OF EVEN CONFLICT BETWEEN PERU AND THE USSR.

3. NEWSPAPER COVERAGE OF THE PARIS ARTICLE WAS EXTENSIVE. A JANUARY 8 EDITORIAL IN THE GOP-CONTROLLED "EL COMERCIO" COMMENTS THAT IT IS BOTH SAD AND SHAMEFUL THAT UNDER THE GUISE OF FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION A PUBLICATION WHICH HAS HAD LITTLE OR NOT INTEREST IN PERU SHOULD BECOME AN ALLY OF THOSE WHO SEEK TO DAMAGE PERU'S IMAGE AND ITS ECONOMY BY PAINTING IT AS SUDDENLY SUBORDINATED TO THE GEOPOLITICAL INTEREST OF A WORLD POWER. ON THE SAME DAY AN ARTICLE IN "LA PRENSA" BY PATRICIO RICKETTS REY DE CASTRO CALLS THE ARTICLE SHAMEFUL, AN OUTRAGE AGAINST JOURNALISM, AND EXAMPLE OF IMMORALITY, AND A DEMONSTRATION OF THE FACT THAT CERTAIN PARTIES WILL STOP AT NOTHING TO ADVANCE THEIR INTERESTS. RICKETTS RELATES THE PARIS ARTICLE TO AN EARLIER ONE IN "TIME" (SEE BELOW). GOP-OWNED "LA CRONICA'S" THIRD PAGE ON  
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JANUARY 9 WAS DEVOTED ENTIRELY TO REACTIONS TO THE "LE NOUVEAU JOURNAL" ARTICLE. INTERVIEWS WITH PROMINENT PERSONALITIES AND "MAN ON THE STREET" TYPES ALL ROUNDLY CONDEMN THE ALLEGATION THAT PERU HAS SIGNED A MILITARY TREATY WITH THE USSR AS WELL AS THE INTENT BEHIND THE CHARGES.

4. THIS STRONG REACTION CAME AFTER "EL COMERCIO" ON JANUARY 6 PUBLISHED AN EMOTIONAL EDITORIAL AGAINST "TIME" MAGAZINE FOR PUBLISHING AN ARTICLE REPORTING THAT PERU AND CHILE WERE LOCKED IN A DESPARTE ARMS RACE IN PREPARATION FOR CONFLICT. THE EDITORIAL, WHICH LABELED "TIME" AS A "CAPITALIST-BELLCOSE PUBLICATION" AND "AN ORGAN OF THE MULTINATIONALS' INTERESTS", VIOLENTLY DENIED THE VERACITY OF THAT REPORT AND EXALTED FRIENDSHIP AND BROTHERHOOD BETWEEN NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES. "EL COMERCIO" ALSO BLAMED FOREIGN INTERESTS, PARTICULARLY THOSE COUNTRIES WHO MASTERMIND MOVES IN THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY, ALONG WITH "WAR TRAFFICKERS",

FOR FOMENTING HOSTILITIES IN HOPES OF REAPING POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC BENEFITS.

5. COMMENT. THE LARGE-SCALE (BY LATIN AMERICAN STANDARDS) PURCHASE OF SOVIET MILITARY EQUIPMENT HAS HEIGHTENED PRESS INTEREST AND APPREHENSION AND FEARS ABOUT PERU'S INTENTIONS IN NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES. IT WAS ONLY A MATTER OF TIME BEFORE THE MEDIA TRANSLATED THESE FEARS INTO THE KIND OF REPORTING SEEN IN IN THE TWO ARTICLES. THE GOP'S LOUD PUBLIC CONDEMNATION OF AN ARTICLE THAT WOULD NOT NORMALLY BE SEEN IN LIMA ("LE NOUVEAU JOURNAL" PIECE) ANF OF A "TIME" REPORT AHT HAD NOT EVEN APPEARED ON THE NEWSTANDS AT THE TIME OF THE "EL COMERCIO" EDITORIAL, ARE AMPLE PROOF OF HIGH-LEVEL GOP SENSITIVITY TO THE ISSUES OF SOVIET MILITARY COOPERATION, TENSIONS CREATED BY CENTURY-OLD ANTAGONISMS WITH CHILE, AND THE CURRENT IMPASSE IN PERU-CHILE TALKS ON AN OUTLET TO

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THE SEA FOR BOLIVIA. "LE NOUVEAU JOURNAL", IN EXTRA-POLATING SCATTERED BITS OF INTELLIGENCE ON PERUVIAN ARMS PURCHASES INTO A MILITARY ALLIANCE BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES, MAY HAVE DONE THE GOP A FAVOR B PROVIDING IT WITH A CONCRETE AND, WE BELIEVE TOTALLY FALSE, ALLEGATION THAT PERU CAN DENY WITH JUSTIFIABLE INDIGNATION. AT THE SAME TIME THESE ARTICLES AND THE GENERAL REACTION AMONG PERU'S NEIGHBORS TO RECENT RUMORS AND REPORTS OF NEW ARMS PURCHASES, TROOP MOVEMENTS AND SOVIET PENETRATION HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO A REALIZATION ON PERU'S PART OF THE EXTENT OF THE CONCERN THAT HAS DEVELOPED AND TO A SERIES OF DECLARATIONS AND ACTIONS (EXCHANGE VISITS, THE ACTIVATION OF A JOINT PERU-CHILE COMMISSION, ETC.) DESIGNED TO REESTABLISH COMMUNICATION, DEMONSTRATE PEACEFUL INTENTIONS AND REDUCE TENSIONS.

6. AS LONG AS PERU CONTINUES TO BUY FROM AND COOPERATE WITH THE SOVIETS IN MILITARY AFFAIRS, HOWEVER, INFORMATION AS WELL AS DISTORTIONS AND EXAGGERATIONS OF THIS SORT WILL CONTINUE TO CREATE PROBLEMS FOR THE GOP. DEAN

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